

SENATE RECORD VOTE ANALYSIS

106th Congress
1st Session

Vote No. 92

April 27, 1999, 5:11 p.m.
Page S-4246 Temp. Record

COLUMBINE SCHOOL TRAGEDY/Passage

SUBJECT: A resolution expressing the sense of Congress on the tragic violence that occurred on April 20, 1999, at Columbine High School, Littleton, Colorado . . . H.Con. Res. 92. Passage.

ACTION: CONCURRENT RESOLUTION AGREED TO, 99-0

SYNOPSIS: As introduced and passed, H.Con. Res. 92, a resolution expressing the sense of Congress on the tragic violence that occurred on April 20, 1999, at Columbine High School, Littleton, Colorado, will resolve that Congress:

- condemns, in the strongest possible terms, the heinous atrocities which occurred at Columbine High School;
- offers its condolences to the families, friends, and loved ones of those who were killed and expresses its hope for the rapid and complete recovery of those wounded;
- applauds the hard work and dedication exhibited by the hundreds of local, State, and Federal law enforcement officials and the others who offered their support and assistance; and
- encourage the American people to engage in a national dialogue on preventing school violence.

Those favoring passage contended:

One week ago today, two students went on a murderous rampage in their school with guns and homemade bombs, and then they killed themselves. At the end, 12 students and 1 teacher were dead, and more than 20 others were wounded. The Nation is still in shock over this senseless, violent tragedy. The collective feeling of loss, sadness, and disbelief is enormous. The immediate reaction is to ask why it happened, followed quickly by how can it be stopped from happening again? Neither question may have an answer. The normal, human impulse is to rush to judgment, to do something, almost anything, to make sense of the tragedy and to prevent future such attacks. We wonder if maybe some law may have been passed that could have stopped the students' attack, yet we know that they violated dozens of laws before killing themselves, including at least 17 firearms and explosives laws. Could more funding

(See other side)

YEAS (99)			NAYS (0)		NOT VOTING (1)	
Republican (55 or 100%)	Democrats (44 or 100%)		Republicans (0 or 0%)	Democrats (0 or 0%)	Republicans (0)	Democrats (1)
Abraham	Hutchinson	Akaka	Johnson			
Allard	Hutchison	Baucus	Kennedy			
Ashcroft	Inhofe	Bayh	Kerrey			
Bennett	Jeffords	Biden	Kerry			
Bond	Kyl	Bingaman	Kohl			
Brownback	Lott	Boxer	Landrieu			
Bunning	Lugar	Breaux	Lautenberg			
Burns	Mack	Bryan	Leahy			
Campbell	McCain	Byrd	Levin			
Chafee	McConnell	Cleland	Lieberman			
Cochran	Murkowski	Conrad	Lincoln			
Collins	Nickles	Daschle	Mikulski			
Coverdell	Roberts	Dodd	Murray			
Craig	Roth	Dorgan	Reed			
Crapo	Santorum	Durbin	Reid			
DeWine	Sessions	Edwards	Robb			
Domenici	Shelby	Feingold	Rockefeller			
Enzi	Smith, Bob	Feinstein	Sarbanes			
Fitzgerald	Smith, Gordon	Graham	Schumer			
Frist	Snowe	Harkin	Torricelli			
Gorton	Specter	Hollings	Wellstone			
Gramm	Stevens	Inouye	Wyden			
Grams	Thomas					
Grassley	Thompson					
Gregg	Thurmond					
Hagel	Voinovich					
Hatch	Warner					
Helms						

EXPLANATION OF ABSENCE:

- 1—Official Business
- 2—Necessarily Absent
- 3—Illness
- 4—Other

SYMBOLS:

- AY—Announced Yea
AN—Announced Nay
PY—Paired Yea
PN—Paired Nay

Compiled and written by the staff of the Republican Policy Committee—Larry E. Craig, Chairman

for counseling in schools have stopped the tragedy? Maybe, but the two gunmen had been sent to counseling after a previous arrest. Were there warning signs that they were going to go on this rampage? They were part of a group of school outcasts who formed what they called the "trench coat mafia," a pro-Nazi group, but they were also very bright, quiet students, and students in other outcast groups in schools across the country have not gone on such rampages. We also wonder if it may be that the schools are too large and impersonal, leaving children alienated and lost in the shuffle, or that maybe much of the blame should be assigned to the Internet, which enables troubled, violent people who were formerly isolated to meet anonymously, validate, and reinforce their dangerous views, or that maybe the problem is that parents have given up on parenting, wanting to be their children's friends or just not wanting to be with their children at all. We also wonder how much blame should be assigned to the effects of our violent, nihilistic culture, especially as depicted in our "entertainment" industry. Too often, the message children get is that there are no transcendent, moral absolutes, only power and pleasure (which are depicted solely as material and physical). Our culture not only whispers, but veritably screams, that anything goes.

There are no easy answers to explain why it happened or how to prevent it from happening again. Many of us, though, do not believe that those questions, while important, are what we need to answer most. The question that matters, and that has always been the question that matters for any individual, in any culture and any age, was asked of one of the murdered students, Cassie Bernal. She was a very religious girl, part of a small evangelical group in her school, and very active in her church and in social work. A few years earlier, though, she was on almost the same track as the two murderers. She was part of a witchcraft group that practiced animal sacrifice, and her parents discovered letters that she had written to her friend that described the various gruesome ways she would like to murder them. After her parents found those letters they sent Cassie to a religious school, forbade her to see her old friends, and sent her to a religious summer camp (which is where she experienced a religious conversion). She later transferred back to the public school so she could be a positive influence on the kids there. Cassie was in the library studying when the shooting and bombing began. She and the other students tried to hide under the tables, and many, including Cassie, began to pray. One of the gunmen approached Cassie and asked her "do you believe in God?" She and those around her knew she was being targeted for her faith, yet she answered "Yes," and her life ended. She died a martyr.

The world will always have evil in it, and it will always have immense courage and decency. People are weak and will be drawn to the empty promises of evil, but their lives can only be full if they have the strength and courage to follow their consciences, however difficult the circumstances. Most people fall short but continue trying; few can match the strength of Cassie. The 20th century French mystic Simone Weil said: "Imaginary evil is romantic and varied, full of charm; imaginary good is tiresome and flat. Real evil, however, is dreary, monotonous, barren; real good is always new, marvelous, intoxicating." Cassie was drawn into witchcraft but rejected it. She found the right path, her life was rich, and she willingly died for her faith.

No arguments were expressed in opposition to passage.